

Pilgrimage Through the Watchtower

Chapter 10: Appeal and Conclusion



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Chapter 10: Appeal and Conclusion

The trauma that I experienced during my pilgrimage through the Watchtower is by no means exceptional. The testimonies of countless thousands of ex-Jehovah's Witnesses are considerably more tragic than mine; many culminating in severe emotional instability, depression, hopelessness, and even suicide. The tragedy to me in this appalling state of affairs is that it is all so utterly unnecessary! Now that I've told my story, I'd like to conclude by making an appeal to you, my reader, whether you be studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, are now an active Jehovah's Witness, or are a Christian interested in reaching out to Jehovah's Witnesses.

If you are currently studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, I hope that my experiences will help you to avoid most of the mistakes that I made during my seven years of involvement with them. It's been well said that "The emptiest and unhappiest occupation in the world is trying to act like a Christian when you are not a Christian." You don't need to discover this truth through your own grueling pilgrimage through the Watchtower. First and foremost, I invite you to come to Jesus personally in prayer, asking Him to forgive your sins and inviting Him to come into your life. Trust Him as your all-sufficient Lord and Savior. Don't let Jehovah's Witnesses sell you their "good news of Jehovah's established (since 1914) kingdom." The Bible speaks of how the apostle Paul "delivered to you as of *first importance* what I also received, that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3,4)." And Peter likewise says that "He [Jesus] Himself bore our sins upon His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (1 Pet 2:24)." You see, the real Christian gospel is simply this: Jesus died on the cross in your place, enduring for you the *full* retribution due your personal sins; past, present, and future. Accept this truth, believe it, and you will be born again! Then after accepting Christ, don't ever allow yourself to be enslaved to a small group of domineering men as I have. If you ever detect such a tendency in your own life, read the book of Galatians to see how Paul dealt with the Judaizers of his day, and follow his sterling example.

If you don't have a good, understandable, independently translated Bible (I'd recommend the New American Standard

Bible or the Revised Standard Version, among many other good ones), then be sure to get one and read it *regularly*. Always preface your reading with prayer to your heavenly Father in Jesus' name, that he may guide you in your reading. Be open and attentive to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, your personal Guide in all your Bible reading and study.

Study Bible doctrine diligently, always with Jesus as the source and center of your doctrine. Other Christian books will be of help to you here. You may want to visit your local Christian bookstore to pick up some good study materials. If you're not sure where to start, talk with the owner of the bookstore and get his recommendations. He'll be familiar with the materials in his store, and he'll undoubtedly be eager to help you in any way that he can.

As you grow in your knowledge and understanding of the Bible, have as a goal the continual development and deepening of your personal love relationship with Jesus.

In time, and as God leads you, I encourage you to visit several evangelical ("born-again"), Bible-based churches in your area. You may have some Christian friends that could help you here. When you find a good one (not a perfect one!), get to know some of the people there. Ask them about local Bible study groups; a small group Bible study is an excellent place for you to learn, share with others, and grow spiritually.

If you are currently one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I would like to offer you some insights that may clear up some misapprehensions that you might have about born-again Christians. First of all, born-again Christians don't hate Jehovah; they love Him! Neither do they hate His Name; it is used often in their sermons, books, and hymns. They have simply followed the New Testament pattern of magnifying, calling upon, and bowing to the "name above all names," Jesus! (Phil 2:9,10) Also, Christians don't hate you; they love you! At the doors they often refuse to talk with you, not because they hate you, but because they're afraid of you. Just as you may have a fear of greeting and talking with an "apostate," in the same way many Christians are afraid of talking with you, a presenter of a false gospel. They will even quote the same verses that you do when considering your proper conduct toward an "apostate," namely, 2 John, verses 9 and 10. And in nearly all cases, though it hurts me to see it happen, it's simply easier for them to close the door than to enter into a meaningful conversation with you. Not knowing enough about you, they are understandably apprehensive.

I must speak frankly with you, my Witness friend, as I know you would with me if our situations were reversed. You must

recognize your position before Jehovah; without Christ, you are lost. 1 John 5:12 is very explicit: "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Romans 8:9 says, "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Notice in verse 15 that this same Spirit is that by which Christians with the heavenly hope cry out, "Abba! Father!" If you do not have this Spirit, you do not belong to Christ. Even more than that, according to God's Word at Galatians 1:8 and 9, the curse of God abides upon you, a preacher of "another gospel." But that's not the end of the story. There is wonderful hope for you. You can be saved *now*, and you can *know* that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13). The only condition is that you come to Jesus (John 5:39,40), the *real* Jesus, and trust Him alone for your salvation. I know that this decision won't be easy for you. As I did, you're going to have to be willing to lose everything to gain Christ (Phil 3:8). But we have Jesus' own assuring words, "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out (John 6:37)."

Your integrity to Jehovah need never be broken. Your Bible knowledge will not be lost. Much of your knowledge and your zeal for service will carry over into your new Christian life.

If you do accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, and if you do come out of the Watchtower, my dear brother or sister, I have a couple of recommendations for you. First and foremost, read, reread, and reread your Bible (a good translation, of course!). Take it literally whenever there is no good reason to do otherwise, and don't be afraid to take it personally. Allow God to lead you into fellowship with other believers. And don't be afraid of the "apostates." Many of them, but by no means all of them, have found Christ in the same way that you have. After I had left the Organization, I was amazed to find that there were hundreds of ex-Jehovah's Witnesses that had independently come to the same conclusions that I had, and had also been born again! You won't be alone. And those ex-Witnesses that have been born again are nothing like the Watchtower describes them. I've personally met several hundred of them, and they are unquestionably some of the happiest, most loving, most *Christian* people that I've ever met. Don't fear them. They're the few people on earth who will be able to fully empathize with you. At the present time local ministries and support groups for Christian ex-Witnesses are springing up all over this country and elsewhere. There are annual conventions of Christian ex-Witnesses in several different locations around the globe. If you can make it, we'd love to see you at the next "Witnesses Now For Jesus" convention held each fall at the Blue Mountain Christian Retreat in New Ringgold,

Pennsylvania. An abundance of Christian testimony, teaching, and fellowship awaits you there!

And finally, my brothers and sisters in Christ, I have a few things that I'd like to share with you. If you are like many of the Christians that I've shared with over the past few years, and even if you've read this far in this book, you may still have some misunderstandings about Jehovah's Witnesses that need to be cleared up.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not intentionally rebellious, evil people. It's true, they don't know Christ, but they're not out to trick you. They're *victims* of an authoritarian religious organization, and they need your help. They're hung up on their own "accurate knowledge." They believe that they know infinitely more about the Bible and God's kingdom than you do, and they have very little patience for what they consider to be emotional ignorance on your part. They most likely will not listen carefully to your testimony, though this is often a very good way to witness to them, for fear that the "truth" in their own hearts may be corrupted. Remember the man and woman in Potsdam who prayed for Jim and me and how we reacted to it? Jehovah's Witnesses are not interested in emotionalism. They're interested in the Bible, and they're interested in *substance*. You need to know this. And yet Jehovah's Witnesses are people, too, like you and me, and they too have feelings, so we need to be sensitive. And above all, we need to not just feel sorry for them, but to *love* them and *help* them. But how?

We must prepare for service. Bible study is an absolute must. It is virtually impossible to make progress with a Jehovah's Witness with only superficial familiarity with God's Word. Sadly to say, at the present time the average Witness knows the Bible far better than the average Christian. Is it any wonder that Christians often get tied into pretzels when discussing Scripture with Jehovah's Witnesses? Happily, though, many Christians and churches are waking up to the rich missionary field that presents itself at their doorstep every few weeks, and are regularly, diligently preparing to "contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)." Basic Christian theology and apologetics are at the top of the list of things to be studied in order to be prepared to deal effectively with Jehovah's Witnesses. There are also several good counter-cult ministries throughout the United States that serve as excellent sources of material on all the major cults. I have listed several of them at the back of this book, and I encourage you to get on their mailing lists and to support them prayerfully, and even financially if possible.

Why the need to witness to Jehovah's Witnesses? Consider

this. Jehovah's Witnesses will not read Christian literature. They will not read Christian books. They will not attend church, nor will they listen to Christian radio or watch Christian television. There is therefore only one source left by which they might hear the gospel of Christ, believe, and be saved. It's YOU!

But how to witness? There are three basic methods, all of which can be used very effectively.

First, if you know the Bible well, and are familiar with Christian and especially counter-cult apologetics, you may want to take the doctrinal approach. The deity of Christ and salvation are probably the two best subjects that you could discuss with the Witness. Salvation may be the most effective, since the Witness will be ill prepared to defend his position, which is ambiguous at best. Any subject, however, when presented with clarity and skill from the Scriptures, can be effective when witnessing to a Jehovah's Witness.

Second, if you are familiar with the history of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, you may want to take the historical approach. Tactfully, yet firmly, present to the Witness, from his own literature if possible, some of the unfulfilled predictions made by the Society over its past hundred-year history. Ask the Witness about the invisible presence of Christ since the year 1874, or about the end of the world in 1914, 1918, 1925, 1942, and 1975. Ask him about the earthly resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the year 1925, and about Beth Sarim, the palatial mansion built for them by "Judge" Rutherford in San Diego. Couple these predictions with the Watchtower's own claim to be God's end-time prophet, His sole channel of communication with mankind. Ask him to read Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 20 through 23, which explains how we are to respond to a "prophet" who speaks in Jehovah's name but whose predictions fail to come true. Ask him about the Society's history of doctrinal change; about the Society's past and present views of vaccinations, organ transplants, and the "superior authorities" of Romans chapter 13. Skillfully using the historical method, you can begin to drive a wedge of apprehension between the Witness and the organization that has so cunningly deceived him.

Third, whether you know the Bible well or not, and whether you are familiar with Watchtower history not, if you are a Christian you can always use the devotional approach. Share your personal testimony with the Witness. Tell him what Jesus means to you, and how He has changed your life. Speak to him of your personal relationship with Jesus. You'll be planting some seeds deep in his heart that, with God's gracious care, will grow to fruition in due time.

A couple of final points about witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses. Do your best to remain on one subject at a time. This may be difficult, as the Witness will likely jump from subject to subject whenever he feels cornered. Something that many have found to be effective is to agree beforehand with the Witness that you'll not deviate from a certain subject until you've fully made your point. Then, when he attempts to jump to another subject, write down his objection, promising to discuss it a little later, and return to the subject at hand. Then, after fully making your original point, finish up by answering his objections that you have written down.

A final point that I'd like to stress is that whether or not you make any genuine progress with the Witness, he's not going to show it. His loyalty to the Organization will force him to put up a front of impenetrability. So don't necessarily expect any immediate, demonstrable results from your witnessing efforts. But don't despair; by God's grace seeds are being planted. Remember, it took seven years of witnessing by at least twelve different Christians before I finally came to Christ.

As this book draws to a close, I'd like to conclude by thanking my God, my blessed Father in heaven for a few things that have become very dear to me.

I thank my Father for His written Word, which proved to be an unfailing light to me, even in the darkest hours of my search for Him. I thank him for the Christians who took the time and effort to speak to me about Jesus when I didn't yet know Him. I thank Him for His glorious salvation, which I have been enabled to receive only by His grace. I thank Him for my new brothers and sisters in Christ, "the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Ti 3:15)." I thank Him for the blessed hope of the church, and for the coming full manifestation of His kingdom, in which all things in heaven and on earth will praise and glorify Him perfectly, for all eternity. And finally, and above all else, I thank Him for Jesus, my precious Lord and my only Savior, who has made all of these things possible.

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